

Message Text

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21

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 MC-02 EB-07 /083 W

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R 182205Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7443

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELIZE

USCINCSO

SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 3762

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: MASS, GT

SUBJECT: GUATEMALAN AIR FORCE PURCHASE OF C-47'S

REF: A) GUATEMALA 3217, B) STATE 165675

1. BRITISH ESTIMATE OF PARATROOP-CARRYING CAPABILITY OF C-47
CITED REF B IS EXAGGERATED. REF A GAVE OUR OWN
ESTIMATES, BASED ON ACTUAL EXPERIENCE WITH PARATROOP DROPS
OF GUATEMALAN TROOPS FROM C-47'S AND ON JANE'S AND GREEN
AND SWANBOROUGH DATA ON THE ARAVA. WE HAVE RE-CHECKED OUR
CALCULATIONS, AND STAND BY THEM, BUT FOR SUCH USE AS
DEPARTMENT SEES FIT WE WILL EXPLAIN THEM IN GREATER DETAIL.

2. GOG NOW HAS TEN C-47'S. TWENTY-TWO IS MAXIMUM NUMBER
OF GUATEMALAN PARATROOPS EVER DROPPED FROM THESE PLANES, AND
THAT WAS ON SHORT FLIGHT WITH SMALL FUEL LOAD. TWENTY IS
MORE REALISTIC FIGURE FOR LONG HAUL (APPROXIMATELY 160
KILOMETERS) WE ARE DISCUSSING. (BRITISH FIGURE WAS 29.)
NORMALLY NOT MORE THAN SEVEN OF THESE PLANES ARE
OPERATIONAL AT ANY ONE TIME. SO IF YOU HAVE TEN C-47'S
YOU HAVE CAPABILITY DROPPING 140 MEN OVER REASONABLE
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DISTANCE.

3. PURCHASE TEN ARAVAS - AND WE DO NOT YET HAVE EVIDENCE CONTRACT SIGNED NOR DE WE KNOW DELIVERY DATES - WOULD GIVEN THEM ADDITIONAL CAPABILITY OF 16 PER PLANE, PERHAPS 17 IF ONE OF TWO DROPMASERS WERE ALSO DROPPED. WE MUST ALSO ASSUME THAT ONLY SEVEN OF THESE WOULD BE OPERATIONAL AT ANY TIME. SO ARAVAS WOULD GIVE THEM ADDITIONAL CAPABILITY OF 112 MEN, FOR TOTAL OF 252 (HALF A BATTALION). DELIVERY OF ADDITIONAL FIVE C-47'S THAT WE HAVE RECOMMENDED WOULD ENABLE GOG DROP ONLY 100 ADDITIONAL MEN, EVEN ASSUMING ALL FIVE WERE OPERATIONAL. THIS TOTAL OF 350 COMPARES WITH 580 FIGURE USED BY BRITISH.

4. WE REPEAT VIEW EXPRESSED REF (A) THAT ANY SIGNIFICATION GUATEMALAN MILITARY ACTION AGAINST BELIZE WOULD REQUIRE A SURGE LOGISTICAL EFFORT. IN THE CASE OF AN AIRDROP, MOVEMENT IN TWO STAGES WOULD NECESSARILY BE INVOLVED - ONE FROM GUATEMALA CITY (AND FROM SAN JOSE, WHERE PARACHUTE BATTALION IS QUARTERED) TO PUERTO BARRIOS OR POPTUN AND ANOTHER FROM TAKEOFF POINT TO BELIZE. THERE WOULD THEREFORE BE ADVANCE WARNING OF ANY ACTION REGARDLESS OF WHETHER GOG ALSO MOBILIZED CIVIL AIR FLEET. AS BRITISH MINISTER NOTED, SUCH MOBILIZATION IS ANOTHER OPTION OPEN TO GOG; THERE ARE WELL OVER A HUNDRED PRIVATE AND COMMERCIAL PLANES IN COUNTRY WHICH, IF THEY COULD ALL BE ASSEMBLED IN ONE PLACE, COULD CARRY TWO OR THREE TIMES AS MANY MEN AS THE 10 ARAVAS OR THE FIVE C-47'S. THEY DON'T NEED ADDITIONAL PLANES TO CARRY OUT WHAT THE MOD HAS TERMED A "SUICIDAL" OPERATION AGAINST BELIZE AIRPORT; BUT THEY NEED A LOT MORE THAN NEW PLANES TO CARRY OUT A SURPRISE OPERATION OR EVEN A SUCCESSFUL ONE.

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